

Globalization, Peace and Development in the Twenty first Century: Religious as well as the Perspective of Fethullah Gulen

Bilal Ahmad Khanday,

Junior Research Fellow, Department of Islamic Studies, University Of Kashmir,

Abstract: Globalization has rendered our world into a small village where people are more interconnected than ever. No nation, region or ethnicity can claim complete isolation. As a result of increased interaction and access to faster means of communication, human beings have greater need than ever for the maturity of mind and spirit to coexist peacefully. Where greater communication should foster cordial relationships between members of the human family, the world instead presents a contrary image where two-thirds of its population suffers from inter personal rifts, violence and war. Peace has always been, in every age, a human need. All the religions of the world advocate peace of mankind and we find plentiful injections regarding peace in different religious scriptures. However, in modern times, peace has become so vital to the survival of humanity that it has now literally become a matter of life and death for humanity. Peace means life: its absence means death. Scholars have distinguished four dimensions of the Peace Ideology of Fethullah Gulen, a Turkish scholar and a peace ideologue- eternal peace, inner peace, inter personal(inter communal) peace and global peace. Unless the international community collectively would not carve out methodologies to establish peace at the global level, development in reality is a day dream, though we are cherishing the material development- a small fragment of the whole.

Key Words: *Altin Nesil; Nasl-i-Cedid; Clash of civilization; Dar al hizmet; Islands of peace; Ahimsa:*

Introduction:

Globalization means interconnectedness, interdependence of people of the globe whereby no individual or nation can claim complete isolation. In other words, we can say that globalization aims at “internationalization” of an individual, taking help from the fastest means of communication which have been rendered quite easily accessible by science and technology. With the result people have become more interconnected than before and an incident in one part of the globe reaches other parts of the globe like forest fire. Globalization has made the world a better place, the world that will eventually lead to economic prosperity, political freedom and world peace. Thomas Freedman¹ notes that globalization, which is the result of the democratization of finance, technology and information is driven by our basic human desire for a better life- a life with more freedom to choose how to prosper, what to eat, what to wear, where to live, where to travel etc. Globalization has provided the best opportunities for democracies and good governance- Mexico, Ghana and Bangladesh are just few examples. A valuable benefit of a globalized world is the uninhabited movement of ideas, people, values, systems across the globe. Perhaps the greatest value of globalization is its potential for creating a world of peace. Economic growth has been identified as one of the strongest forces that turn people away from conflict and wars among groups, tribes and nations. Global trade openness significantly promotes peace.

History testifies that the human is in search of peace from the day first as he is a peace lover by his nature. From the times immemorial he is

striving to establish peace in one way or the other, though the need for peace was not so grave in his early days². With every passing day the situation is going bad to the worst and now he is feeling the dying need to establish peace, though he is enjoying the fruits of the material progress. History abounds in preachers of peace. But it is hard to find in its annals an ideologue who has been capable of presenting the concept as a complete ideology. Perhaps this is why over the centuries no revolution in the true sense of the word has been brought about on the basis of peace. Although we have had a number of peace loving individuals, the establishment of a peaceful society on a mass scale has never become a reality. Human interests have been very deeply associated with peace. That is why every individual, for personal reasons, wants to have a peaceful life.

But he is repeatedly faced with such diverse situations that he needs an ideology of peace to guide him. For peace being the human need is not enough to make him exercise restraint and remain peaceful in all situations. He needs an ideology which convince him at the conscience level of the necessity to keep the peace at all times. We can find examples of this in human history. For instance, let us take democracy. Man has always instinctively cherished the idea of a democratic polity and we find some instances in human history where such a system had been successfully established, although only in a partial way. But the advent of a full-fledged revolution on the basis of democracy became a reality only when the thinkers of modern Europe presented the instinctive aspirations of human beings in the form of a comprehensive ideology. The same is the case with

peace. Peace has always been, in every age, a human need. However, in modern times, peace has become so vital to the survival of mankind that it has now literally become a matter of life and death for humanity. Peace means life: its absence means death.

Peace should be presented in the form of a complete ideology- an ideology which awakens human consciousness; which provides the answer to all life's problems in terms of peace; which describes the utmost importance of peace; right from the individual to the international level. Peace is a prerequisite for all kinds of human progress. With peace we progress: without peace, we face ruin.

Religious sanctions for peace:

Not only Islam but also other religions of the world lay a strong emphasis on establishing peace. We find many verses in the Holy Quran which, in one way or the other, addresses the believers to establish peace. Religious tolerance is a means to live peacefully in a pluralistic society. The doctrine of peace in the Quran can be found both in ethical and mystical forms of manifestation. The very nature of God as understood in Islam is *As-salam* or the cause of peace. Peace has been proclaimed as a supreme virtue for personal behaviour also. The Quran mentions that

*"The slaves of the Beneficent are they who walk upon the earth modestly, and when the foolish ones address them, their answer is peace."*³

In addition, the root word of Islam is s-l-m, which carries connotations of both "peace" and "submission." The words "Islam", "Muslim", "Muslimun" and "Salam" all come from this same word. Considering the violence in the present times, and the proliferation of atomic and nuclear weapons capable of mass destruction, it is incumbent on both Muslims and the followers of other religions to follow the instructions of the Quranic verse for cordial human relationships: Peace is better. If there is an opportunity for peace, even in the midst of war, the Quranic injunction is *"if the enemy inclines towards peace, you should incline towards it too"*.⁴

The methodology of preaching Islam is also peaceful and non violent. Quran says

*"Call to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and exhortation and argue with them in the best manner."*⁵

The Holy Quran shows catholicity and religious tolerance in the following passages:

*Lo! Allah is my Lord and your God, so serve him. That is the right path."*⁶

There is a scope for peace in a pluralistic society and the society can live a prosperous life if it

abides by the regulations put forth by the Almighty. The Holy Quran says:

*There is no compulsion in religion, the right way is indeed, clearly distinct from error. So whoever disbelieves in the devil and believes in Allah, he indeed, lays hold on the firmest handle which shall never break."*⁷

Apart from this, there are many injunctions in the Quran which emphasis the need for mercy, helpfulness, compassion, moderation, love and tolerance in one's attitude towards the opponents and enemies, having direct significance to the doctrine of peace. The retributive form of justice has been sanctioned by the Quran, which bears a close resemblance to the Talmudic tradition.

There are many examples from the life of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) which clearly indicate that his life is full of compassion and peace. His life in Makka was full of examples where he suffered without a protest. He was subjected to many hardships and personal injuries while he was preaching Islam in Makka. His reaction to these was nothing short of the true exposition of non-violence. Even when he was injured by the people of Taif, he in return prayed for their wellbeing.⁸

The prophet frequently advises his companions to be humble, caring and merciful to others in their conduct. There are hundreds of traditions of the prophet in this regard and let me quote here a few:

"The best men are those whose manners re good". (Bukhari and Mishkat)

"You cannot be admitted to Paradise and cannot be true believers, unless you have affection for one another". (Muslim)

"God informed Prophet Moses that of all his servants the dearest to Him was he who was strong enough to take revenge and yet forgive". (Mishkat)

It is thus evident that there is no scope for violence and war, strife and aggression, hatred and enmity in Islam rather it holds very high the activities of peace and coexistence.

Other religions of the world as well emphasis on peace and coexistence which is clearly mentioned in their sacred scriptures. According to Jewish traditions, when the Israelites left Egypt and reached the Sinai desert, God gave them the fundamental Ten Commandments that were to govern their social existence. One of these was:

You shall not kill. (Exodus, 20:13)

This biblical commandment forbids all kinds of violence, whether individual or social, whether directed against one's own community or against another. There is another injunction of the Torah worth quoting in this regard. It embodies such moral teaching as is common to all religions, though differently expressed. The Torah says:

What is hateful to you, do not do to any other man.

The Lord says in the Torah:

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in my holy mountain. (Isaiah, 65:25)

The teachings of Jesus Christ show that he laid great emphasis on God-worship, love of human beings, service of mankind, spiritual development, rising above materialism, treating others well, even if they do not reciprocate, and so on. All these virtues, which in no way, relate to war and violence, stem from the possession of a superior set of values. Jesus Christ enjoined the establishment of peace at all costs throughout his life. In one of his sermons, he observed:

Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the sons of God. (5:9)

The following observation of Jesus Christ is perhaps a realization of this peaceful world:

Your kingdom come- Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (6:9)

At another occasion he says:

But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you. (6:27)

Hinduism is too lays strong emphasis on peace, tolerance and non violence. According to it, a man and his fellow men are one and the same. There is no difference between one and the other. The concept of non-dualism of Hinduism produces a sense of fellow feeling for all living beings. It negates the principle of otherness or we can say that the feeling of otherness simply disappears. It is this concept which is the ideological source of peace in Hinduism. The renowned British historian, Arnold Toynbee, has called this a "live and let live" concept of peace.⁹

Mahavir is considered as the 24th avatar of Hinduism, who laid the principle of *ahimsa* which in later times became a part of Hinduism. According to this principle, violence and aggression of any kind are absolutely wrong. Under the heading of Hinduism, the Encyclopaedia Britannica aptly states:

"In principle, Hinduism incorporates all forms of belief and worship without necessitating the selection or elimination of any". (8/888)

It is worth to quote from writing of Mahatma Gandhi, the great exponent of non-violence in modern times:

"Ahimsa is not the crude thing it has been made to appear. Not to hurt any living thing is no doubt a part of ahimsa. But it is its least expression. Ahimsa to me is the chief glory oh Hindu, has been sought to be explained away by our people as being

meant for sannyasis (saints) only. I do not share this view.

Gautama Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, is regarded as one of the noble and merciful persons of human history. The principles he put forth to govern human life are as:

One must renounce all desires and all thoughts of lust, bitterness and cruelty. One must harm no living creature. One must abstain from all killing. One must work in an occupation that benefits others and harms no one.¹⁰

The very principle of Buddhism is personal reform and it cannot be achieved by force or coercion. It can be said that violence is something alien to Buddhism.

Gulen's ideology of peace:

Mohammed Fethullah Gulen, a Turkish scholar and a peace ideologue has produced remarkable literature advocating peace, coexistence, tolerance and religious pluralism, considering the minutest aspect of the contemporary challenges which needs remedial measures on priority basis. He is considered to be one of the most prominent Islamic scholars and a pioneer of dialogue that contributes to world peace. He has had a great influence on young people with his modern approach in interpreting the Quran and with his global activities in promoting education and seeking dialogue between member of different religions and cultures. He opines that it is not Islam but Muslims who fail to address the contemporary challenges due to their narrow vision and lack of proper understanding. For him, establishing peace among human beings is the most important task, though one of the most difficult of all, as it is one of the primary prerequisite of the human family. His view of human society is based on the principle of harmony, knowledge, justice and peace: wars and violent actions have no place in the essence of Islam. The Islamic understanding of Paradise is based on peace; Paradise is called *Dar al Salam* (the abode of peace). We can understand the importance of peace in Islam from the fact that the very greeting among the people of Paradise is peace. The righteous will be told, "Enter Paradise peacefully and safely forever" (15:46). Even Muslims in their daily greetings use the same language: *as-salamu alaikum*, or "peace be with you".

Gulen says that the Quran constantly encourages believers to incline towards peace in any situation of dispute. All human beings individually should assume the responsibility to make peace, in accordance with the divine principle, "Fear God and make peace among yourselves" (8:1). Political authorities are also advised to make peace and stop violence if it occurs: when fighting occurs between two rival groups, it is incumbent upon the Islamic authority to make peace between the two (49:9).

Gulen says that there is an entire book of the sayings of the prophet on peace building in Sahih al Bukhari, the most authentic collection of the sayings of the prophet. He gives many examples from the life of the prophet wherein he tried to maintain peace, how harsh the circumstances were.

The scholars have identified four aspects of the peace ideology put forth by Mohammed Fethullah Gulen which must be brought about simultaneously- pit falls in any aspect mar the others. And if this type of peace would be brought about, the world will be a worthy place to live on. The four aspects are as: eternal peace, inner peace, interpersonal (inter communal) peace and universal peace.¹¹ Gulen envisages eternal peace as the ultimate goal of human life, almost synonymous with salvation. When one manages to direct oneself to the path of eternal life and happiness, however miserable and troublesome one's life may be, as one considers this world to be the waiting lounge for Heaven, one accepts everything contentedly and gives thanks. For Gulen, eternal peace means achieving God's approval, walking in the greatest spiritual ecstasy, overstepping the boundaries of existence and reaching Eden, with contemplation of the eternal togetherness in the hereafter. The second aspect of peace is inner peace: tranquility and peace of mind, an inner confidence born of faith that enables the religious believer to face adversity without anxiety or despair. For Gulen, the faith is the seed which can germinate the seeds of inner peace. He describes the people of faith as peaceful with themselves. "Worldly people who are enslaved by their egos live only to fulfill their carnal desires. Never content, they feel no tranquility. But ideal people are always at peace with themselves and always feel secure. They are content and, furthermore, they lace their knowledge and understanding at the service of humanity". (Gulen 2004: 129,159). A third aspect of peace is inter personal peace. Gulen sees interior peace, not only of individuals but of environs, communities and whole societies, as precondition for healthy and hearty dialogue among peoples, and as one of the marks of Islamic civilization. He has the conviction that along with justice, harmony, brotherhood, solidarity, human progress and spiritual advancement, peace should characterize the Muslim's daily life. It is peace as the basis for societal relations which should which should be the force that attracts others to Islam. He expresses the core of his message regarding tolerance, dialogue and peace in his famous book "Pearls of Wisdom": "be so tolerant that your heart becomes wide like the ocean. Become inspired with faith and love for others. Offer a hand to those in trouble, and be concerned about everyone." A fourth dimension of peace distinguished by Gulen is universal or global peace. He emphasized the importance of the indispensability of religion and intercultural dialogue for world peace through his efforts to meet with other religious and community leaders

within his native country and abroad. He stresses that peace, justice and stability are of the utmost importance to Islam; fighting and war are only secondary occurrences which are bound to specific reasons and condition. He opposes the use of violence to attain political ends, and teaches his followers that the days of getting things done by brute force are over. In today's enlightened world the only way to get others to accept your ideas and ways is by persuasion and the use of convincing arguments.

He regards atrocities as a great blow to world peace that unfairly tarnished the credit of believers. He says:

"Terror can never be used in the name of Islam or for the sake of any Islamic ends. A terrorist cannot be a Muslim and a Muslim cannot be a terrorist. A Muslim can only be the representative and symbol of peace, welfare, and prosperity. If a ship is carrying nine criminals and one innocent person, Islam does not allow for the ship to be sunk in order to punish the nine criminals; doing so would violate the rights of the one innocent person."¹²

To establish peace in the world in particular and specially in Turkey, he is aspiring for the Golden Generation, which is peaceful, made up of individuals who are living examples of peace, who will build bridges of dialogue and mutual understanding to make peace among people. Earlier, Mehmet Akif Ersoy, the writer of the Turkish National Anthem, spoke of his Ideal Generation which he named as *Asim'in Nesli* while as Badiuzzaman Said Nursi spoke of the New Generation which he named as *Nesli Cedid*.^{14a} This generation will be the model for the rest of the world. He mentions certain specific qualities of this generation: knowledge, faith, love, idealism, altruism and action. When Samuel P. Huntington spoke of "clash of civilizations", he ardently urged the building of "breakwaters" in order to prevent such a clash.¹³

He argues that the world we are living in, is but a Dar al Hizmet wherein we have to serve the humanity irrespective of region, language, ethnicity, culture or religion. Gulen believes that real education can play a pivotal role in establishing peace throughout the globe. He is convinced that a better and peaceful future for humanity can be established only through universal and intercultural education. An education of the heart and soul as well as of the mind and character, aimed at reviving and invigorating the whole being to achieve competence and providing goods and services useful to others. Education is the most important element in the Gulen Movement and it is also an effective tool for the longevity of the movement. In this regard, he and his followers have established thousands of educational institutions which he calls the "islands of peace" in Turkey, Central Asia and many other parts of the

world which educate people of different religions and ethnicities. His Golden Generation has already contributed, through educational endeavors, to the building of peace in many areas of conflict, including the Balkans, Northern Iraq, Northern Ireland and the Philippines.¹⁴

Conclusion:

In today's global village, borders have blurred and several cultures come into contact more often and more intensively with each other. The interethnic and interreligious climate throughout the world has undergone a drastic change in recent years. Free trade and commerce and fastest means of communication have brought the people of the globe very close to each other. Ethnic, cultural and religious divisions, re-emergence of religious

groups and identities, the politicization of religion and the rise of religious fundamentalism have created wedges between the members of the human family. With the result, its members are, unfortunately, with arms against each other to subjugate the other. In such circumstances, peace has become a matter of life and death for the contemporary man who is having easy access to the material which can destroy the whole world in a short span of time. To overcome this and also to cherish the material development, he has to inculcate the qualities of compassion, love, fellow feeling, cooperation, mutual understanding, mercy, coexistence, brotherhood, justice and peace-leaving enmity and clash far behind and thus disproving the theory propounded by Samuel P. Huntington.

References:

1. Freedman, T. (2001), speech
2. Khan, Maulana Wahiduddin, *The Ideology of Peace: Towards a Culture of Peace*, Googword Books, New Delhi, 2003
3. The Holy Quran, 25:63
4. Ibid, 8:61
5. Ibid, 17:125
6. Ibid, 19:36
7. Ibid, 6:8
8. Singh, N.K, *Islam: Religion of Peace*, Global Vision Publishing House, New Delhi, 2002, p. 2
9. Opcit, p. 92
10. Ibid, p. 94
11. Yilmaz, I. (ed.) *Peaceful Coexistence: Fethullah Gulen's Initiatives in the Contemporary World*, Tugra Books, 2007, p. 271
12. Gulen, M.F, *Tolerance in the Life of the Individual and Society*,
13. Esposito, John and Ihsan Yilmaz (eds.), *Islam and Peace building: Gulen Movement Initiatives*, Blue Dome Press, 2010, p.176
14. Ibid, p.178